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LETTER DATED 14 JANUARY 1991 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF TUNISIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF
THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to enclose a letter addressed to you by Mr. Habib Boularès,
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tunisia, which I should be grateful
if you would have circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ahmed GHEZAL
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Letter from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic
of Tunisia addressed to the President of the Security Council

At a time when the world is facing the threat of imminent war, the Security Council remains the last recourse.

We note that, five months after it flared up, the Gulf crisis is on the point of degenerating into a devastating war which would be a disaster for the world, with absolutely unforeseeable consequences. This would also be the first instance of a war being waged on the responsibility of the Security Council.

The Middle East, which is at the heart of this conflict and which has already experienced six deadly wars since the establishment of the United Nations and is still suffering the consequences of a series of unresolved conflicts, would again pay the highest price for this new war.

The United Nations, and in particular the Security Council, have examined in turn the conflicts which have arisen in the region, and have on each occasion adopted substantive resolutions which have however for the most part remained a dead letter. The implementation of these resolutions would certainly have eased tensions and helped dissipate the antagonisms in order to bring about the necessary establishment in the region of a climate conducive to the development of trust, security and peace. It is the build-up of unresolved conflicts which lies at the root of the instability and the continuing violence.

A return to the international rule of law is not out of reach. The Security Council is in a position to ensure respect for its own resolutions, the essence of which is the obligation of all countries in the region to comply equally with the basic principles of:

- non-use of force;
- non-acquisition of territories by force;
- non-interference in internal affairs;
- and settlement of disputes by peaceful means.

Thus, right from the first days of the current crisis, Tunisia had called for the withdrawal of the Iraqi forces from Kuwait and the restoration of that country's sovereignty in line with international legality. Tunisia has also implemented the embargo decided upon by the Security Council, despite the heavy losses this has caused to its economy, quantified estimates of which have been communicated to the appropriate United Nations bodies.

Tunisia has, lastly, approached Iraq, Kuwait and the other parties concerned with a view to exploring ways of bringing about a peaceful solution which will safeguard the legitimate interests of all parties. The eight-point initiative of President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Republic of Tunisia, his persistent efforts within the framework of the Arab Maghreb Union and the intense contacts he is maintaining with fraternal and friendly countries strengthen our conviction that a peaceful settlement without the use of force is possible within the framework of the international rule of law.

We consider that the opening of dialogue between Iraq and the United States of America, as well as the initiatives of the United Nations Secretary-General and those of the European Community, are only the beginning of a negotiating process which deserves to be maintained and strengthened with the support and involvement of the entire international community in order to ensure and hasten the chances of a peaceful settlement.

The commitment of the parties concerned to apply all the Security Council resolutions to the letter is a valuable asset for the United Nations; it is now up to the Security Council, under these circumstances, to examine ways and means of implementing its own resolutions while there is still time. The effort to design and structure this implementation, which it is the task of the Council itself to define, cannot be purely and simply set aside in favour of war. Quite the contrary, this effort is an earnest of the fact that war is not justified.

Should settlement of the Kuwaiti question through negotiation lead in tandem to the beginnings of a settlement of the other conflicts in the region, in respect for the international rule of law, this cumulative effect is certainly desirable, and deserves to be encouraged rather than rejected, particularly at the cost of war. On the other hand, encouraging the use of force as a means of solving the Gulf crisis alone will inevitably aggravate still further frustrations and destruction of a kind which would irreparably compromise the very purpose of the operation, as well as the conditions for settling other conflicts in the region.

The precedent of the use of force is a dangerous one, in that this practice might be extended to other situations, at the risk of engulfing the United Nations in a logic of war, contrary to its own vocation.

Lastly, the dispute between two fraternal and neighbouring countries, Iraq and Kuwait, calls rather for recourse to a peaceful solution as the only means of preserving the chances for reconciliation and concord and ensuring the future restoration of peaceful and lasting relations of trust between them.

The logic of peace is all the more essential in that the peoples of the region have, since the creation of the United Nations, experienced six deadly wars which have enabled them neither to settle the conflicts nor to attain peace. It is high time that we worked collectively to wrest the region from the infernal cycle of war by opting precisely for the peace that is the *raison d'être* of the Security Council.

Thus, while reiterating its support for the initiatives taken by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his efforts to promote a dialogue between the parties concerned, Tunisia calls on the international community to help

him in his task and to loyally assist his peace effort. The Security Council should thus be able to meet again in time to evaluate the results of the actions taken and to adopt the measures needed to secure the effective settlement of the present crisis while preserving the chances of peace for the benefit of the entire region.

Peace is indivisible. One of the lessons to be learnt from the history of this embattled Middle East region is that the legacy of past conflicts cannot be overcome either by further violence or by a selective approach whose future is uncertain.

The second lesson is that it is not enough to debate and adopt resolution after resolution; the Security Council must provide a framework for the application of its resolutions, including an appropriate timetable.

We formally invite the Security Council to assume its full responsibilities towards the region and to define such a framework for settling the main question, namely, the question of Palestine, for that is the basic problem whose outcome will determine the solution of all the other problems besetting the region. Only then will a way be found of settling such other related questions as collective security, supervised disarmament, the abolition of weapons of mass destruction and the creation of a denuclearized zone.

Thus, while commending the statement made by the President of the Security Council on 20 December 1990, Tunisia calls expressly on the Council to adopt a resolution deciding to convene an International Peace Conference on the Middle East at a definite date in 1991.

Such a contribution by the Security Council would not impede early settlement of the Kuwait crisis and would make it possible to set in motion, for the first time in the Middle East, a peace process that would guarantee a sustained and progressive settlement effort, putting an end to the cycle of violence and giving all parties a chance to contribute equally to establishing the peace that remains the legitimate concern of all the peoples of the Middle East and the fundamental vocation of the United Nations.

The Security Council must therefore choose in time between a negotiated settlement which will ensure a lasting peace beneficial to the entire region and the use of force, with disastrous and unforeseeable consequences. The Security Council, in short, holds the key to war and peace.

Habib BOULARES
Minister for Foreign Affairs of
the Republic of Tunisia
